



CAPE EVANS

THE SEARCH FOR SCOTT AND HIS PARTY

Before arriving in Antarctica with Manchurian ponies, Scott had discussed with Oates the possibility of using Indian mules the following summer. By mid March seven mules, the gift of the Indian Government were ordered. On 6 February 1912 the mules arrived on the *Terra Nova* at Cape Evans. That day Scott and his party having reached the South Pole, were struggling homewards over the Polar Plateau. However they were over 1000 kms from Cape Evans and still had to descend the Beardmore Glacier and to cross The Barrier (Ross Ice Shelf).

At Cape Evans there are a few artefacts associated with the search for Scott, made by Dr Atkinson's party in November 1912. On the end of a bunk in 'The Tenements', are two 'eye-shades' worn by mules. Resembling ragged floor mops, they were designed to hang down the animals forehead to prevent snow blindness while in the stables, can be seen the names of the mules stencilled on the hut wall.

Atkinson's search party with the mules, set out from Cape Evans on 29 October. From the outset the animals suffered. On the ice shelf, temperatures of -30°C caused ice to form on their bodies, icicles flecked with blood hung from their nostrils and their eyes were coated with rime. Garn observed, "Abdullah touches nothing, but just stands and stares forlornly ahead". With a ration of just 5 kg a day and starved of their normal diet, they began eating tea leaves, clothes, rope and dog biscuits.

On 11 November the tent containing the bodies of Scott, Wilson and Bowers was located and the next day, the weakest two mules Lal Khan and Khan Sahib, were shot to provide food for the dogs. The remaining five animals reached Cape Evans where three days later Abdullah and Begum were shot. The remaining three, Gulab, Pigaree and Rani, were put out of their misery on 19 January, the day the *Terra Nova* began its third and final voyage from Antarctica.

*Prepared for Antarctic Heritage Trust
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